

BUDDHISM ITS ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

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Though a lotus flower grows in the murky water, it breaks the surface and fragrantly blooms. Thus the wise are born in worldly society yet they rise above it and realize Nibbana - The Buddha.

Be a Lotus Flower; follow The Buddha's Five Precepts and Eightfold Path. The Buddha was well-acquainted with all this diversity and tried to provide proper guidance to the society. His ideas were at once traditional and revolutionary, transformative and emancipating. That is why he became easily acceptable to the masses and the elites. Many kings like Pasenadi of Kosala came to him to seek advice and tranquility and peace of mind. There are many stories available in the early literature about Pasenadi's marriage with a woman of low caste by deceit and Buddha's advice to the king to adopt the policy of 'forget and forgive'. The Buddha opposed jativada. He was well steeped in the Vedic lore. The contribution of Buddhism to jambudvipa, that is, the Great Prabudha Bharathian thought and culture is immense. Buddha was born and brought up in the cultural soil of Jambudvipa, that is, Prabuddha Bharath, purified the soil to enable blossoming of the best flowers and fruits in the cultural garden of Jambudvipa, that is, Prabuddha Bharath. Buddhism has not only awakened Jambudvipa, that is, Prabuddha Bharath, but also the whole of Asia in the ancient times, and now it is awakening the whole world in the modern times. Buddhism has been the best product of Jambudvipa, that is, Prabuddha Bharathian culture to be offered to the world at large. There is a need to re-establish Buddhism in its pure and pristine form, and that will help Jambudvipa, that is, Prabuddha Bharath and also the world.

Buddhism had an extremely humble beginning for a religion that is now known throughout the world. Having its origin in the 6th century B.C.E., makes Buddhism one of the oldest religions in the world as well. The teachings of Buddhism developed, in many ways. From one man's awakening to our modern world of today, Buddhism has evolved and adapted to the various cultures and countries it has encountered, which has enabled it to survive into the 21st century.

In 563 B.C.E., a prince was born into the clan of the Shakyas at the beginning of the Magadha period (564-324 B.C.E.) in the southern Himalayan town of Lumbini, which is in Southern Nepal/Northern Jambudvipa, that is, Prabuddha Bharath. His name was Siddhartha Gautama, but he would later be known simply as the Buddha, which means "the awakened one." Gautama's father sought to keep his son isolated from the realities of the world - including old age, death, and suffering - and he succeeded for approximately 30 years. Despite the best efforts of his father, he began to come into contact with the outside world and the realities of human existence.

Siddhartha Gautama discovered the Buddhist Middle Way—a path of moderation away from the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification.

Siddhartha Gautama attained awakening sitting under a pipal tree, now known as the Bodhi tree in Bodhi Gaya, India. Gautama, from then on, was known as "*The Perfectly Self-Awakened One*," the Samyaksambuddha.

Buddha found patronage in the ruler of Magadha, emperor Bimbisara. The emperor accepted Buddhism as personal faith and allowed the establishment of many Buddhist “Viharas.” This eventually led to the renaming of the entire region as Bihar.

At the Deer Park near VârâGasî in northern India, Buddha set in motion the Wheel of Dhamma by delivering his first sermon to the group of five companions with whom he had previously sought awakening. They, together with the Buddha, formed the first SaEgha, the company of Buddhist monks, and hence, the first formation of Triple Gem (Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha) was completed.

For the remaining years of his life, the Buddha traveled in the Gangetic Plain of Northeastern India and other regions.

Buddha attained Parinibbana in the abandoned jungles of Kuúinâra. Just before Buddha died, he told his followers that thereafter the Dhamma would be their leader. The early arhats considered Gautama’s words the primary source of Dhamma (doctrine, teaching) and Vinaya (rules of discipline and community living), and took great pains to formulate and transmit his teachings accurately. Nonetheless, no ungarnished collection of his sayings has survived. The version of the Canon (accepted scripture) preserved in Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan are sectarian variants of a corpus that grew and crystallized during three centuries of oral transmission.

The Buddha did not appoint a successor, and asked his followers to work for personal salvation. The teachings of the Buddha existed only in oral traditions. The Sangha held a number of Buddhist councils in order to reach consensus on matters of Buddhist doctrine and practice.

According to the scriptures, a monk by the name of Mahakasyapa presided over the first Buddhist council held at Rajgir. Its purpose was to recite and agree on the Buddha’s actual teachings and on monastic discipline. Some scholars consider this council fictitious.

The Second Buddhist Council is said to have taken place at Vaishâli. Its purpose was to deal with questionable monastic practices like the use of money, the drinking of palm wine, and other irregularities; the council declared these practices unlawful.

What is commonly called the Third Buddhist Council was held at Pâtaliputra, and was allegedly called by Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE. Organized by the monk Moggaliputta Tissa, it was held in order to rid the sangha of the large number of monks who had joined the order because of its royal patronage. Most scholars now believe this council was exclusively Theravada, and that the dispatch of missionaries to various countries at about this time was nothing to do with it.

What is often called the Fourth Buddhist council is generally believed to have been held under the patronage of emperor Kanishka at Jâlandhar, though the late Monseigneur Professor Lamotte considered it fictitious. It is generally believed to have been a council of the Sarvastivada School.

Following the Buddha’s passing, many philosophical movements emerged within Buddhism. The first of these were the various Early Buddhist Schools (including Theravada). Later Mahayana Buddhism and Vajrayana Buddhism arose.

The Early Buddhist Schools were the various schools in which pre-sectarian Buddhism split in the first few centuries after the passing away of the Buddha (in about the fifth century BCE). These schools have in common an attitude to the scriptures, that doesn't accept the inclusion of the Mahayana Sutras as valid teachings of Gautama Buddha. It accepts the Tipitaka as the final recension of the teachings of the Buddha.

- Theravada is the single remaining representative of the Early Buddhist Schools of Indian Buddhism. Theravada is now practiced mainly in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos.
- Another prominent Nikaya school was the Sarvastivada, and much of its doctrine was incorporated into Tibetan Buddhism. It included one of the main branches of Indian *Abhidhamma* that was instrumental in the creation of the Yogacara doctrine. Its system of monastic rules *Vinaya* is still used in Tibetan Buddhism and has also been influential in monastic Chinese Buddhism.

The Mahâyâna branch of Buddhism popularized the concept of a *Bodhisattva* (literally *enlightened being* or “a Buddha-to-be”) and the worship of the bodhisattvas. Bodhisattvas like Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara, and Maitreya became the focus of popular devotional worship in the Mahâyâna sect. According to the Mahâyâna tradition, the key attributes of the bodhisattvas are compassion and kindness. Mahayana Buddhism includes the following Indian schools:

- Mādhyamaka (*Middle Way*), a Mahâyâna tradition popularized by Nāgārjuna and Āśvaghoṣa.
- Yogācāra (*Consciousness Only*), founded by Asaśa and Vasubandhu.

A form of Indian Buddhism that emerged in the 4th century AD and later became widespread in Tibet, and Japan. The Vajrayana developed in India, but was spread to Tibet, and has also been practiced in Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, and Mongolia.

This school emerged from forest meditation traditions in northern India, in which the entire emphasis of teachings was on practice, using skillful means to attain the goal of awakening in one's present lifetime. This form is also known as Vajrayana (*The Diamond Vehicle*). Tantrism is an esoteric tradition. Its initiation ceremonies involve entry into a mandala, a mystic circle or symbolic map of the spiritual universe. Also central to Tantrism is the use of mudras and mantras. Vajrayana became the dominant form of Buddhism in Tibet and was also transmitted through China to Japan, where it continues to be practiced by the Shingon sect.

It is generally accepted that the spread of Buddhism from India to Tibet and then to the wider regions of Central and East Asia took place mainly via the trade (and religious) route that went through the valley of Kathmandu, situated in present-day Nepal. The valley, forms the cradle of the Nepali state, and since the farthest point in historical time, has found itself under the cultural influence of the South Asian Hindu (and also Buddhist) civilization. However, being a distant outpost of Hinduism (and Buddhism), it was spared from the ravages of later conquests and social upheavals. Even after Buddhism died in the heartland, it survived in Kathmandu valley. Monastic records in the numerous monasteries show that till the mid-medieval period in Nepali history, Tibetan students regularly came there for learning Buddhism

from the local spiritual masters. The Tibetan religious scripts Lantsha and Vartu are variants of the Ranjana system used by the Newars of Kathmandu. However, due to numerous social, economic and political factors prominent among which was declining patronage from the Hindu rulers, Buddhist monasticism in the valley died. By then Tibetan Buddhism had already gained prominence in the region. Today, in the urban centres of Kathmandu valley, we still find Indian Mahayana Buddhism, modified through mixing with Vajrayana, practiced by the local Buddhist Newer population.

Asoka and the Mauryan Empire

The Maurya empire reached its peak at the time of Emperor Asoka, who himself converted to Buddhism after the Battle of Kalinga. This heralded a long period of stability under the Buddhist emperor. The power of the empire was vast—ambassadors were sent to other countries to propagate Buddhism. Greek envoy Megasthenes describes the wealth of the Mauryan capital. Stupas, pillars and edicts on stone remain at Sanchi, Sarnath and Mathura, indicating the extent of the empire.

Emperor Ashoka the Great (304 BCE–232 BCE) was the ruler of the Maurya Empire from 273 BCE to 232 BCE.

Ashoka reigned over most of India after a series of military campaigns. Emperor Ashoka's kingdom stretched from South Asia and beyond, from present-day Afghanistan and parts of Persia in the west, to Bengal and Assam in the east, and as far south as Mysore.

According to legend, emperor Ashoka was overwhelmed by guilt after the conquest of Kalinga, following which he accepted Buddhism as personal faith with the help of his mentors Radhasvami and Manjushri. Ashoka established monuments marking several significant sites in the life of Shakyamuni Buddha, and according to Buddhist tradition was closely involved in the preservation and transmission of Buddhism.^[18] He used his position to propagate the relatively new philosophy to new heights, as far as ancient Rome and Egypt.

Graeco-Bactrians, Sakas and Indo-Parthians

Menander was the most famous Bactrian king. He ruled from Taxila and later from Sagala (Sialkot). He rebuilt Taxila (Sirkap) and Pushkalavati. He became Buddhist and remembered in Buddhists records due to his discussions with a great Buddhist philosopher in the book *Milinda Panha*.

By 90 BCE Parthians took control of eastern Iran and around 50 BCE put an end to last remnants of Greek rule in Afghanistan. By around 7 CE an Indo-Parthian dynasty succeeded in taking control of Gandhara. Parthians continued to support Greek artistic traditions in Gandhara. The start of the Gandharan Greco-Buddhist art is dated to the period between 50 BCE and 75 CE.

Kushan Empire

Kushan Empire under emperor Kanishka was known as the Kingdom of Gandhara. The Buddhist art spread outward from Gandhara to other parts of Asia. He greatly encouraged Buddhism. Before Kanishka Buddha was not represented in human form. In Gandhara Mahayana Buddhism flourished and Buddha was represented in human form.

This tower was reported by Fa-Hsien, Sun-Yun and Hsuan-Tsang. This structure was destroyed and rebuilt many times and remained in semi ruins until it was finally destroyed by Mahmud of Ghazni in 11th century.

The Pala and Sena era

Under the rule of the Pala and Sena kings, large mahaviharas flourished in what is now Bihar and Bengal. According to Tibetan sources, five great Mahaviharas stood out: Vikramaúila, the premier university of the era; Nalanda, past its prime but still illustrious, Somapura, Odantapurâ, and Jaggadala.^[19] The five monasteries formed a network; “all of them were under state supervision” and their existed “a system of co-ordination among them . . it seems from the evidence that the different seats of Buddhist learning that functioned in eastern India under the Pâla were regarded together as forming a network, an interlinked group of institutions,” and it was common for great scholars to move easily from position to position among them

Dhamma masters

Jambudvipa, that is Prabuddha Bharath shramanas propagated Buddhism in various reigons, including East Asia and Central Asia.

In the Edicts of Ashoka, Ashoka mentions the Hellenistic kings of the period as a recipient of his Buddhist proselytism. Emissaries of Ashoka, such as Dharmarakkita, are described in Pali sources as leading Greek (“Yona”) Buddhist monks, active in Buddhist proselytism (the Mahavamsa, XII).

Roman Historical accounts describe an embassy sent by the “ Jambudvipa, that is Prabuddha Bharath king Pandion (Pandya?), also named Porus,” to Caesar Augustus around the 1st century. The embassy was travelling with a diplomatic letter in Greek, and one of its members was a sramana who burned himself alive in Athens to demonstrate his faith. The event made a sensation and was described by Nicolaus of Damascus, who met the embassy at Antioch, and related by Strabo (XV,1,73)^[23] and Dio Cassius (liv, 9). A tomb was made to the sramana, still visible in the time of Plutarch, which bore the mention:

(“The sramana master from Barygaza in India”)

Lokaksema is the earliest known Buddhist monk to have translated Mahayana Buddhist scriptures into the Chinese language. Gandharan monks Jnanagupta and Prajna contributed through several important translations of Sanskrit sutras into Chinese language.

The Jambudvipa, that is Prabuddha Bharathian dhyana master Buddhahadra was the founding abbot and patriarch of the Shaolin Temple. Buddhist monk and esoteric master from North India (6th Century CE), Bodhiruci is regarded as the patriarch of the Ti-Lun school. Bodhidharma (c. 6th century) was the Buddhist Bhikkhu traditionally credited as the founder of Zen Buddhism in China.

In 580, Jambudvipa, that is Prabuddha Bharathian monk Vinitaruci travelled to Vietnam. This, then, would be the first appearance of Vietnamese Zen, or Thien Buddhism.

Padmasambhava, meaning “*lotus-born*”, is said to have brought Tantric Buddhism to Tibet in the 8th century. In Bhutan and Tibet he is better known as “Guru Rinpoche” (“*Precious Master*”) where followers of the Nyingma school regard him as the second Buddha. Shantarakshita, abbot of Nalanda and founder of the Yogachara-Madhyamika is said to have helped Padmasambhava establish Buddhism in Tibet.

Indian monk Atisha, holder of the *mind training* (Tib. lojong) teachings, is considered an indirect founder of the Geluk school of Tibetan Buddhism. Indian monks, such as Vajrabodhi, also travelled to Indonesia to propagate Buddhism.

Revival of Buddhism in India

Anagarika Dharmapala and the Maha Bodhi Society

A revival of Buddhism began in India in 1891, when the Sri Lankan Buddhist leader Anagarika Dharmapala founded the Maha Bodhi Society. Its activities expanded to involve the promotion of Buddhism in India. In June 1892, a meeting of Buddhists took place at Darjeeling. Dharmapala spoke to Tibetan Buddhists and presented a relic of the Buddha to be sent to the Dalai Lama.

Dharmapala built many viharas and temples in India, including the one at Sarnath, the place of Buddha’s first sermon. He died in 1933, the same year he was ordained a bhikkhu.

Bengal Buddhist Association

In 1892, Kripasaran Mahasthavir founded the Bengal Buddhist Association (Bauddha Dharmankur Sabha) in Calcutta. Kripasaran (1865–1926) was instrumental in uniting the Buddhist community of Bengal and North East India. He built other branches of the Bengal Buddhist Association at Shimla (1907), Lucknow (1907), Dibrugarh (1908), Ranchi (1915), Shillong (1918), Darjeeling (1919), Tatanagar Jamshedpur (1922), as well as in Sakpura, Satbaria, Noapara, Uninepura, Chittagong Region in present day Bangladesh.

Tibetan Buddhism

Following the Dalai Lama’s departure from Tibet, Indian Prime Minister offered to permit him and his followers to establish a “government-in-exile” in Dharamsala.

Tibetan exiles have settled in the town, numbering several thousand. Most of these exiles live in Upper Dharamsala, or McLeod Ganj, where they established monasteries, temples and schools. The town is sometimes known as “Little Lhasa”, after the Tibetan capital city, and has become one of the centres of Buddhism in the world.

Aboriginal Inhabitants of Jambudvipa, that is, the Great Prabuddha Bharathians (Scheduled Caste) Buddhist movement

A Buddhist revivalist movement among Aboriginal Inhabitants of Jambudvipa, that is, the Great Prabuddha Bharathians (Scheduled Caste) was initiated in 1890s by Aboriginal Inhabitants of Jambudvipa, that is, the Great Prabuddha Bharathians (Scheduled Caste) leaders such as Iyothee Thass, Brahmananda Reddy, and Dharmananda Kosambi. In the 1950s, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar turned his attention

to Buddhism and travelled to Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) to attend a convention of Buddhist scholars and monks. While dedicating a new Buddhist vihara near Pune, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar announced that he was writing a book on Buddhism, and that as soon as it was finished, he planned to make a formal conversion to Buddhism. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar twice visited Burma in 1954; the second time in order to attend the third conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists in Rangoon. In 1955, he founded the Bharatiya Bauddha Mahasabha, or the Buddhist Society of India. He completed his final work, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, in 1956. It was published posthumously.

After meetings with the Sri Lankan Buddhist monk Hammalawa Saddhatissa, Ambedkar organised a formal public ceremony for himself and his supporters in Nagpur on October 14, 1956. Accepting the Three Refuges and Five Precepts from a Buddhist monk in the traditional manner, Ambedkar completed his own conversion. He then proceeded to convert an estimated 500,000 of his supporters who were gathered around him. Taking the 22 Vows, Ambedkar and his supporters explicitly condemned and rejected Hinduism and Hindu philosophy. He then traveled to Kathmandu in Nepal to attend the Fourth World Buddhist Conference. He completed his final manuscript, *The Buddha or Karl Marx* on December 2, 1956.

Vipassana movement

The Buddhist meditation tradition of Vipassana meditation is growing in popularity in Jambudvīpa, that is, the Great Prabuddha Bharath. Many institutions—both government and private sector—now offer courses for their employees. This form is mainly practiced by the elite and middle class Indians. This movement has spread to many other countries in Europe, America and Asia. And through the Internet to all over the world. Attempts are being made to celebrate Buddha Jayanthi in all the countries in general and White House in particular to spread the teachings of Buddha non-violence and peace for the welfare and happiness of all beings.

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